

BOOK REVIEWS

SAVAGE, C. (1979). Pheasants in Asia – 1979. World Pheasant Association. U.K. Pp. 1-116. Illustrated with black and white photographs and line drawings.

The World Pheasant Association (WPA) is a non-governmental organisation concerned with the conservation of the order Galliformes (Pheasants, Grouse, Partridges, Francolins, Quails, etc.). In 1979 they organised in Kathmandu the first ever international symposium devoted entirely to pheasants. "Pheasants in Asia" comprises the 28 papers presented at the symposium mostly by delegates from Europe and several Asian countries.

The papers are divided equally between those that deal with the status and conservation of pheasants in the wild and concerned with breeding pheasants in captivity. One of the main objectives of the latter being to produce surplus stock for reintroduction into areas from which a particular species has been exterminated in the wild. The success of such reintroductions requires a detailed knowledge of the ecology of the species. the lack of such knowledge is a major obstacle at present and the WPA is taking playing useful role in sponsoring work on wild pheasants in Asia.

A good account of pheasant conservation activities in Thailand is given in a paper by Boonlerd Angsirijinda. He stresses the fact that the main threat to pheasants lies in the destruction of their forest habitat and describes the measures being taken to protect forest ecosystems by creating new Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks in Thailand. He also gives information on the captive breeding centre for the Siamese Fireback (*Lophura diardi*) which the Wildlife Conservation Division of the Royal Thai Forest Department has established in the Bang Phra non-hunting area near Chon Buri. This programme was started with birds provided by the WPA from England. A lot of useful experience has been gained by the Thai staff of the centre but it is not perhaps justified to claim that the programme is going well as no young Siamese Firebacks have yet been reared.

The main conclusion of the symposium, which is reflected in a series of resolutions, is that many more National Parks or similar protected areas need to be established in the forests where rare pheasants occur. In Thailand economic and social pressures are such that it is no longer realistic to hope to conserve more than a few isolated fragments of lowland forest. The numerous parks and sanctuaries are mostly in upland areas. The subject of pheasant conservation outside protected areas should therefore receive more attention. Only a few components of the habitat are of key importance to any one species and in temperate regions several galliformes thrive in man modified habitats. Conservation in Thailand would benefit greatly if wildlife could be positively managed in settled areas outside the parks and sanctuaries. Such management should encourage the people themselves to benefit, where appropriate by being allowed to take a sustainable yield of wildlife products. Thai conservationists should give more recognition to hunting as a legitimate use of wildlife.

"Pheasants in Asia" is a very readable publication and contains much information of interest to people concerned with wildlife in Thailand. It is available from the WPA, Harraton Square, Church Lane, Exning, Suffolk CB8 7HA. U.K. price £8 surface mail, £11.50 airmail.

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